

Region 4
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Science and Ecosystem Support Division
Athens, Georgia

OPERATING PROCEDURE

Title: Complaint Resolution

Effective Date: October 23, 2014

Number: SESDPROC-020-R4

Authors

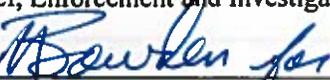
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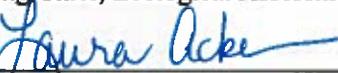
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Revision History

The top row of this table shows the most recent changes to this controlled document. For previous revision history information, archived versions of this document are maintained by the SESD Document Control Coordinator on the SESD local area network (LAN).

History	Effective Date
<p>SESDPROC-020-R4, <i>Complaint Resolution</i>, replaces, SESDPROC-020-R3</p> <p>General: Corrected any typographical, grammatical, and/or editorial errors. Throughout the document mention of quality system or SESD quality system was replaced with Field Branches Quality System or FBQS.</p> <p>Cover Page: Changed the Author from Liza Montalvo to Bobby Lewis. Changed the Enforcement and Investigations Branch Chief from Danny France to John Deatrick. Changed the Ecological Assessment Branch Chief from John Deatrick to Acting Chief, Laura Ackerman. Changed the FQM from Bobby Lewis to Hunter Johnson.</p> <p>Section 2.3: Edited the section to reflect the practice of Section Chiefs informing the FQM of complaints when they happen as opposed to notifying the FQM during January of all complaints throughout a year.</p>	October 23, 2014
<p>SESDPROC-020-R3, <i>Complaint Resolution</i>, replaces, SESDPROC-020-R2</p>	March 11, 2014
<p>SESDPROC-020-R2, <i>Complaint Resolution</i>, replaces, SESDPROC-020-R1</p>	July 8, 2010
<p>SESDPROC-020-R1, <i>Complaint Resolution</i>, replaces, SESDPROC-020-R0</p>	November 1, 2007
<p>SESDPROC-020-R0, <i>Complaint Resolution</i>, Original Issue</p>	October 1, 2007

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1 General Information

1.1 Purpose

This document defines the procedure used within the SESD field branches to evaluate and resolve complaints.

1.2 Scope/Application

This procedure applies to all work conducted under the scope of the SESD field branches quality management system. Mention of trade names or commercial products in this operating procedure does not constitute endorsement or recommendation for use.

1.3 Documentation/Verification

This procedure was prepared by persons deemed technically competent by SESD management, based on their knowledge, skills and abilities. The official copy of this procedure resides on the SESD local area network (LAN). The Document Control Coordinator (DCC) is responsible for ensuring the most recent version of the procedure is placed on the LAN and for maintaining records of review conducted prior to its issuance.

1.4 Definitions

1.4.1 Complaint

Written or verbal notification that a specified aspect of SESD's operation regarding the Field Branches Quality System (FBQS), environmental data collection or analysis is alleged to be unsatisfactory.

1.4.2 Internal Complaint

Complaint received from within SESD.

1.4.3 External Complaint

Complaint received from and individual or organization outside of SESD.

1.4.4 Valid Complaint

For purposes of this operating procedure, a complaint that is associated with the FBQS, environmental data collection or analysis.

1.5 References

Complaint Evaluation Form, SESDFORM-026, Most Recent Version

SESD Operating Procedure for Corrective Action, SESDPROC-009, Most Recent Version

SESD Operating Procedure for Preventive Action and Quality Improvement, SESDPROC-017,
Most Recent Version

2 Methodology

2.1 General

This procedure describes how complaints will be addressed within the SESD field branches. Complaints may originate from internal or external sources. Personnel in the field branches should notify the appropriate Section Chief of issues concerning internal complaints associated with the FBQS or technical operations. If external complaints are received by staff members within the field branches, the complaints should be forwarded to the appropriate Section Chief.

2.2 Complaint Resolution

Upon receipt, all complaints will be handled in the following manner:

1. The Section Chief will contact the source of the complaint in order to discuss the details of the relevant issue and to determine if the complaint is valid.
2. If the Section Chief determines the complaint is not valid, this will be noted on the SESD Complaint Evaluation Form (SESDFORM-026) and the Section Chief will maintain the original form.
3. If the Section Chief determines the complaint is valid, the Field Quality Manager (FQM) will be consulted to determine if the complaint is a nonconformance within the SESD FBQS or technical operations.
4. If a valid complaint is not deemed a nonconformance, the Section Chief and FQM will determine if the issue is a candidate for a preventive action or quality improvement. If the complaint is a candidate for a preventive action or quality improvement, the issue will be addressed in accordance with the SESD Operating Procedure for Preventive Action and Quality Improvement (SESDFORM-017). If the complaint is not a candidate for a preventive action or quality improvement, the Section Chief will work with the source of the complaint to resolve the issue. The resolution will be noted on the SESD Complaint Evaluation Form (SESDFORM-026) and the Section Chief will maintain the original form.
5. If a valid complaint is deemed a nonconformance, the FQM will initiate a corrective action in accordance with the SESD Operating Procedure for Corrective Action (SESDFORM-009).

Figure 1 contains a flow chart for complaint resolution as described above.

2.3 Records

All aspects of complaint receipt, evaluation and resolution will be noted by the appropriate Section Chief on the SESD Complaint Evaluation Form (SESDFORM-026). Once a complaint has been received, the Section Chief will notify the FQM of the complaint but will only provide a copy of the SESD Complaint Evaluation Form (SESDFORM-026) to the FQM if a complaint is deemed to be a candidate for preventive action, quality improvement or nonconformance. If a complaint is deemed not to be a candidate for preventive action, quality improvement or nonconformance then the Section Chief will maintain the original copy of the form.

Figure 1: Complaint Resolution Flowchart

